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BILLERICAY & WICKFORD

Wednesday, June 30, 2010

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MASS EVICTION AT TRAVELLERS' SITE

Council sends in bulldozers to move gypsies off illegal settlement

Laura Brown, Joshua
Farrington and Natalie
Hoodless

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THE mass eviction of gypsies from
an illegal site has begun.

Bailiffs arrived at Hovefields, in
Wickford, on Tuesday morning and
gave families an hour's warning
before the diggers moved in and
cleared some of the 15 homes.

The decision to move in was
taken late on Monday night after it
was discovered several of the fam-
ilies were away travelling.

Traveller Linda Brown, 39, said:
"They came in at 7.30am with three
big machines and started bulldoz-
ing homes."

Away for summer

Her neighbour Jerry Sweeney,
46, added: "Some people have gone
away for the summer and one man
is in hospital in London after hav-
ing a heart attack. He doesn't even
know what's going on."

"Now he has nothing to come
home to."

Tony Ball, leader of Basildon Dis-
trict Council, said: "We are secur-
ing some of the plots that have been
vacated because we do not need
to serve 28 days' notice if the plots
are empty."

"Some of the travellers have
moved on and others are on holiday
but if there are people who have
subsequently occupied the plots,
then we will remove them."

Homes and caravans that were
left unoccupied at the site, off Hov-
efields Avenue, were cleared and
hard core laid by the gypsies has
been removed.



SMASH: A bulldozer wrecks a home at the illegal travellers' site at Hovefields just off the A127

Photograph by Chris Ruffell

As the bulldozers ploughed
through the individual settle-
ments, children looked on in be-
wilderedment and teenagers ran
between the plots pulling up wires
and salvaging all they could.

One said: "It is wrong, it is sav-
age. I am living on one of the yards
that is going to be dug up and I don't
know where we will go after this."

The council and appointed bailiff
firm Constant & Co hope the evic-

tion will send a warning shot to the
86 families at Dale Farm, Crays
Hill, who are living under the
threat of imminent eviction.

Cllr Ball added: "This is us fol-
lowing through on our commit-
ment to return the land to green
belt, as required by the law."
Just last week, anxious travellers
from Dale Farm met police to seek
assurances their children would be
protected from imminent eviction.

Representatives of the Dale Farm
Housing Association held a meet-
ing with assistant chief constable,
Derek Benson, at Basildon police
station on Friday to discuss the role
the police would play during the
planned eviction.

Traveller, Mary Ann McCarthy,
who has 22 grandchildren at the
site, said: "You can just imagine
how it's going to be with women
trying to look after their children

and their homes at the same time.

"We want to know that the chil-
dren will be safe. With all the big
machinery coming in, it will be
very frightening for them."

"So we have suggested they could
be brought to some of the local halls
or churches."

A spokesman for Essex Police
said: "For obvious operational
reasons, we are not going to divulge
what our policing will be."

Tributes
paid to
old English
gentleman

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